Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718

November 30, 2015

To: Governor's Office, Tim Baker, State Capitol, Room 204, P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620
Environmental Quality Council, State Capitol, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901
Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, P.O. Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

Director's Office	Parks Division	Lands Section	FWP Commissioners
Fisheries Division	Legal Unit	Wildlife Division	Design & Construction

MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620
MT State Parks Association, P.O. Box 699, Billings, MT 59103
MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., P.O. Box 201800, Helena, MT 59620
James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624
George Ochenski, P.O. Box 689, Helena, MT 59624
Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771
Montana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624
Wayne Hurst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923
Jack Jones, 3014 Irene St., Butte, MT 59701
Jack Atcheson, 2309 Hancock Avenue, Butte MT 59701
Beaverhead Conservation District, 420 Barrett Street, Dillon, MT 59725
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, 1520 E 6th Avenue, Helena, MT 59601
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 585 Shepard Way, Suite 1, Helena, MT 59601
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 420 Barrett Street, Dillon, MT 59725
Big Hole Watershed Committee, Box 21, Divide, MT 59727
Montana Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 7186, Missoula, MT 59807
Dan Vermillion, FWP Commissioner, 13 Kindsfather Dr., Livingston MT 59047
Earnest and Colleen Bacon, 2215 Fishtrap Creek Road, Wisdom, MT 59761
Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, 730 N. Montana Street, Dillon, MT 59725-9424
George Grant Chapter of Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 563, Butte, MT 59703
Skyline Sportsmen, P.O. Box 173, Butte, MT 59703
Anaconda Sportsmen, 2 Cherry, Anaconda, MT 59711

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed draft Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for improvements to the 12-acre Salmon Fly Fishing Access Site (FAS), which has been a popular recreational site since its acquisition by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) in 1985. The FAS is located along the Big Hole River 1 mile south of Melrose, Montana. The site provides quality recreational opportunities for fishing, boating, floating and camping.

Affected by years of heavy use, FWP proposes to accommodate increasingly heavy public use and to improve recreational facilities at Salmon Fly FAS. FWP proposes to improve parking and camping facilities that will include expanding the parking area, stabilizing the riverbank, expanding and improving the campground facilities, and developing a new camp loop road.

You can view and download the EA from the FWP Website: Opportunities for Public Comment, http://fwp.mt.gov/home/publicComments.html, Under "FWP Lands"

The comment period for this EA runs from November 30, 2015 through December 31, 2015. Written comments can be mailed, emailed or delivered in person to the address below, and must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on December 31, 2015. Please include your name and address with any comment.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks – Region 3
Attn: Salmon Fly Fishing Access Site Proposed Improvement
1400 S. 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718

Email: rheagney@mt.gov

If you have any questions about the proposal, please call Ray Heagney at (406) 994-4042.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Sam B. Sheppard
Region Three Supervisor

Draft
Environmental Assessment

SALMON FLY FISHING ACCESS SITE
PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

NOVEMBER 2015

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Salmon Fly Fishing Access Site
Proposed Improvements Project
Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action:

The 12-acre Salmon Fly Fishing Access Site (FAS) has been a popular recreational site along the Big Hole River since its acquisition by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) in 1985 and provides quality recreational opportunities for fishing, boating, floating, camping, picnicking, and wildlife viewing. In an effort to accommodate heavy public use and improve recreational facilities at the FAS, FWP proposes to improve parking and camping facilities at Salmon Fly FAS. Proposed improvements include expanding and improving the parking area, stabilizing the riverbank, expanding the campground, and constructing a new camp loop road.

2. Agency authority for the proposed action:

The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted Section 87-1-605, Montana Code Annotated (MCA), which directs FWP to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses. The legislature earmarked a funding account to ensure that the fishing access site program would be implemented. Section 87-1-303, MCA, authorizes the collection of fees and charges for the use of fishing access sites, and contains rule-making authority for their use, occupancy, and protection. Furthermore, Section 23-1-110, MCA, and Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 12.2.433 guide public involvement and comment for improvements at state parks and fishing access sites, which this document provides.

ARM 12.8.602 requires the Department to consider the wishes of the public, the capacity of the site for development, environmental impacts, long-range maintenance, protection of natural features and impacts on tourism as these elements relate to development or improvement to fishing access sites or state parks. This document will illuminate the facets of the proposed action in relation to this rule. See *Appendix A* for HB 495 qualification.

3. Name of project:

Salmon Fly Fishing Access Site Proposed Improvement Project

4. Project sponsor:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Region 3
1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718
406-994-4042

5. Anticipated Schedule:

Estimated Comment Period: December 2015
Estimated Decision Notice: January 2016
Estimated Commencement Date: Fall 2016
Estimated Completion Date: Fall 2016
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 35%

6. Location:

Salmon Fly Fishing Access Site is located on the Big Hole River one mile south of Melrose, Montana and one mile west of Interstate 15, 30 miles southwest of Butte in Beaverhead County, Section 35 T2S R9W.

Figure 1. General Location of Salmon Fly FAS

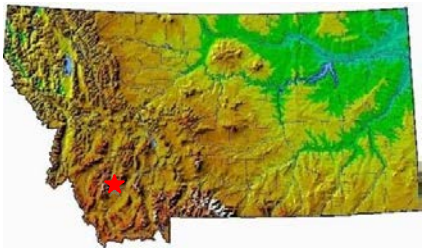


Figure 2. Highway Location of Salmon Fly FAS

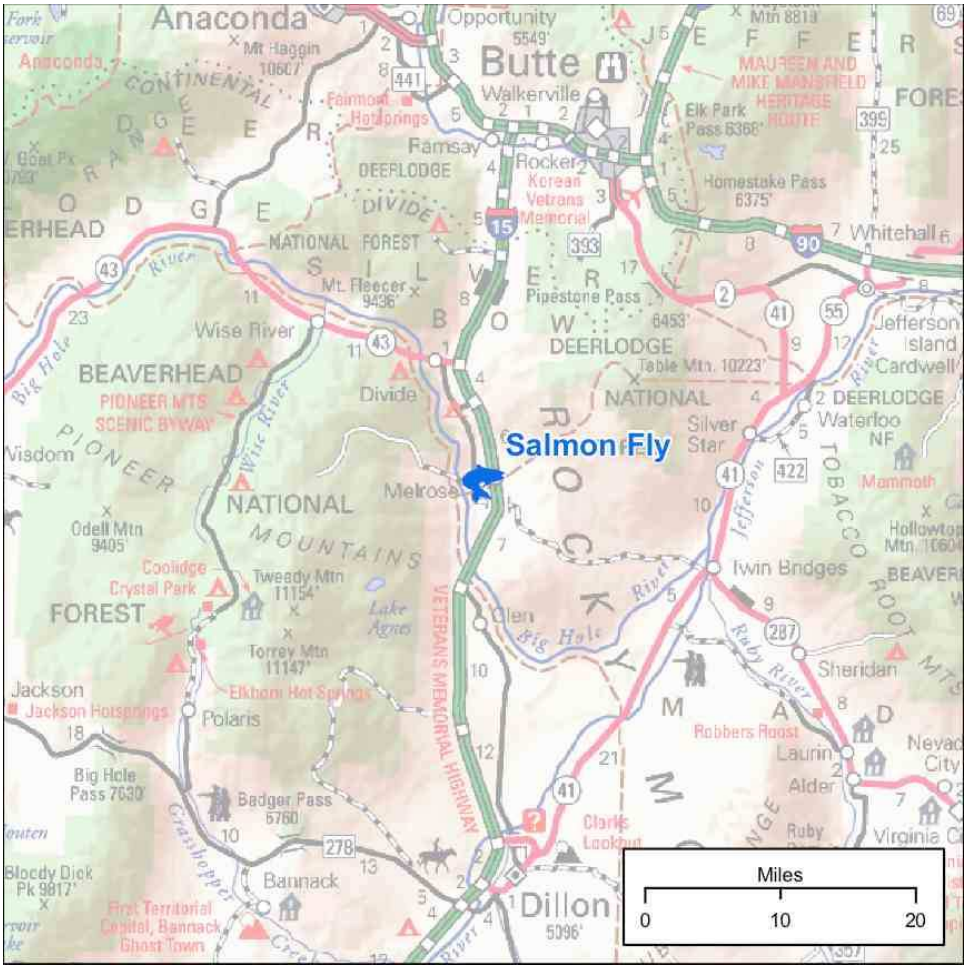


Figure 3. Aerial View of Salmon Fly FAS, Located on Hahnkamp Island

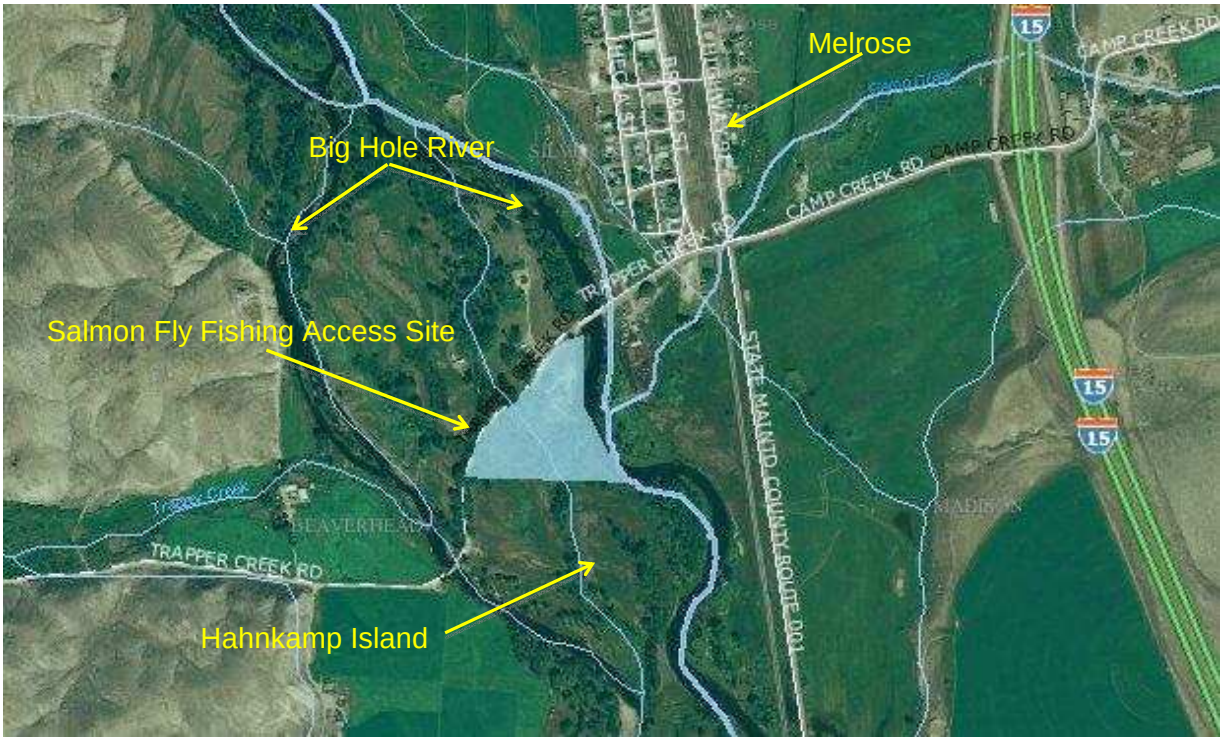
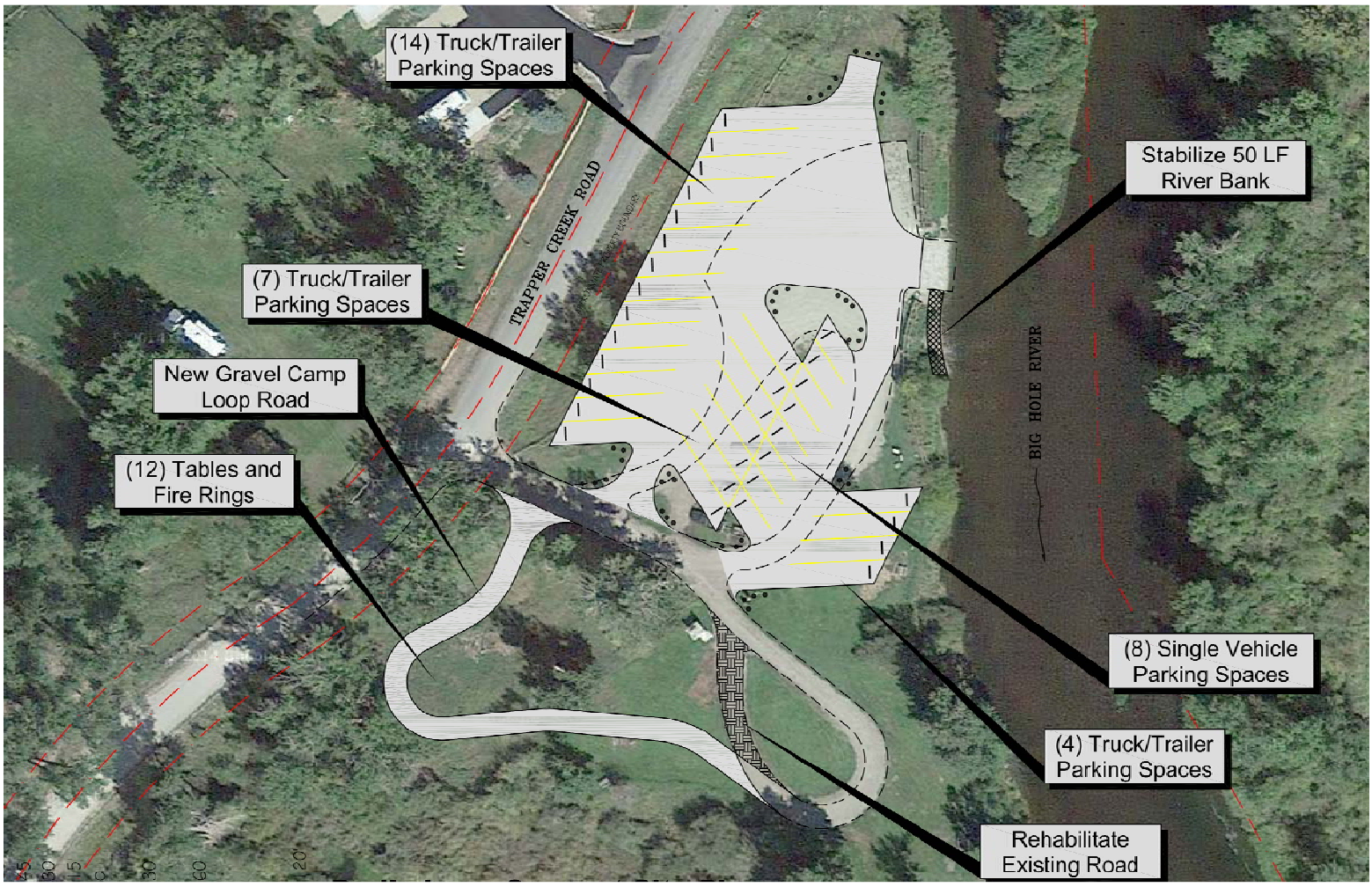


Photo 1. Current Parking Facilities at Salmon Fly FAS

Figure 4. Salmon Fly Fishing Access Site Preliminary Concept Site Plan



7. Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

	Acres		Acres
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	2.5
Residential	0		
Industrial	0	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland	0
(b) Open Space/	0	Dry cropland	0
Woodlands/Recreation		Forestry	0
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	0	Rangeland	0
Areas		Other	0

8. Local, State or Federal agencies with overlapping or additional jurisdiction:

(a) Permits: Permits will be filed at least 2 weeks prior to project start.

Agency Name	Permits
Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks (FWP)	124 MT Stream Protection Act

Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality (DEQ)	318 Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity
US Army Corps of Engineers	404 Federal Clean Water Act
Beaverhead County	Floodplain Permit

(b) Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks Site Protection Fund	$24,046
Federal Wallop Breaux	$72,137
Total	$96,183

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
Natural Heritage Program	Species of Concern *(Appendix B)*
State Historic Preservation Office	Cultural Clearance *(Appendix E)*

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

From its modest beginnings at Skinner Lake in the Beaverhead Mountains of Southwest Montana, the Big Hole River flows 153 miles to its confluence with the Beaverhead River near Twin Bridges. Early explorers and settlers were drawn to the Big Hole by the sheer size, beauty, and richness of the high elevation valley or “hole” as the trappers called it. The river remains free flowing for its entire course, adding to its uniqueness and charm. In addition, the Upper Big Hole River contains the last stream-dwelling population of arctic grayling in the lower 48 states, which has prompted many significant private partnerships and cooperative efforts to ensure the protection of this valuable population.

Salmon Fly FAS is located on Hahnkamp Island, a comparatively flat island of gravelly and sandy alluvium in the main current of the Big Hole River. The Big Hole River is one of the most popular and heavily used fishing streams in Montana and an increasing number of anglers are discovering the fishing opportunities of the Big Hole River. The Big Hole River is open to angling from the third Saturday in May through November 30, with specific exceptions listed in the 2015 Montana Fishing Regulations. According to recent surveys by FWP, the average angler days per year from 2005 to 2013 on the 50-mile stretch from the mouth (river mile 0) to Divide Creek (river mile 50) was 37,671, with a low of 28,386 in 2007 and a high of 47,089 in 2013. The regional ranking for this stretch of river averaged the 6th most fished body of water and the state ranking for this stretch averaged the 17th most fished body of water in Montana during this same period out of more than 1,400 stream reaches, lakes, or reservoirs that were surveyed within the state. The nearest FAS upstream of Salmon Fly FAS (river mile 38) is Maidenrock FAS (river mile 42) and the nearest downstream is Brownes Bridge FAS (river mile 32). Both outfitters and the general public frequently use Salmon Fly FAS as a put-in and take-out site for boats and rafts.

Vegetation found on Salmon Fly FAS is diverse with three Ecological Systems found on the FAS, as defined by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP). The FAS supports an extensive community of black cottonwood, Russian olive, red-osier dogwood, chokecherry, hawthorn, Wood’s rose, willow, smooth brome, Kentucky bluegrass, and reed canarygrass. A variety of introduced grasses cover the developed portions of the FAS. The search by the MNHP found that dwarf phacelia, mealy primrose, and annual Indian paintbrush are the only plant Species of Concern that have been observed within the vicinity of the proposed project.

Wildlife species found in the vicinity of Salmon Fly FAS include white-tailed and mule deer, elk, moose, black bear, mountain lion, red fox, coyote, badger, beaver, northern river otter, American mink, and a variety of small mammals. A wide variety of resident and migratory bird species use or travel through the area on a seasonal basis, including bald eagle, golden eagle, osprey, American white pelican, great horned owl, great blue heron, and a variety of other raptors, waterfowl, and songbirds. According to the MNHP, no species listed as Threatened or Endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), are found in the vicinity of Salmon Fly FAS. Golden Eagle, great blue heron, greater sage grouse, arctic grayling, hoary bat, spotted bat, and Townsend's big-eared bat which are Montana Animal Species of Concern, have been observed in the vicinity of Salmon Fly FAS *(Appendix B)*. Game fish found in this stretch of the Big Hole River include arctic grayling, brook trout, brown trout, rainbow trout, burbot, and mountain whitefish. Other fish species found in this reach include white sucker, longnose sucker, mottled sculpin, and longnose dace.

The 12-acre Salmon Fly FAS has been a very popular and heavily used recreational site since its acquisition by FWP in 1985, with only primitive parking, boat launching, and camping facilities initially provided at the FAS. In 2010, the pioneered, gravel boat ramp was replaced with a single-wide concrete boat ramp. Existing facilities at the FAS include: a gravel access road; a gravel loop road with unimproved parking along the loop; a single-wide, concrete boat ramp; a concrete vault latrine; six primitive campsites with tables and fire rings; perimeter fencing; and directional, informational, interpretive, and regulatory signs.

Visitor use of Salmon Fly FAS is heavy and during the annual salmon fly hatch over 50 truck/trailer vehicles are parked on the FAS and along Trapper Creek Road, creating congestion and a safety hazard for through traffic and neighboring residences. Camping facilities are also insufficient to support demand. FWP proposes to improve the parking and camping facilities at Salmon Fly FAS, including: 1) developing an expanded, designated, gravel parking area to accommodate approximately 25 truck/trailers and eight single vehicles; 2) stabilizing approximately 50 feet of river bank adjacent to the boat ramp using jute rapped willow lifts, 3) establishing twelve designated campsites with fire rings and tables; 4) constructing a new gravel camp loop road; 5) rehabilitating the existing camp loop road; 6) removing hazard trees; 7) repairing fencing; and 8) installing barrier rocks to control vehicle access.

The property would continue to be managed under existing FWP public use regulations. Management of the FAS includes routine maintenance, control of vehicles, regulation of camping, and other accepted FWP recreation area management policies. Protection of the natural resources, the health and safety of visitors, and consideration of neighboring properties are being considered and incorporated into improvement plans for this site. Primitive camping is currently allowed on the site with a fee of $7 per night with a fishing license and $12 per night without a fishing license with a seven-night maximum.
The use of ATV's, hunting, and discharge of weapons are not allowed on Salmon Fly FAS. The proposed project would improve recreational opportunities for fishing, boating, floating, camping, picnicking, and wildlife viewing; would preserve this stretch of riparian and open-space habitat; and fill a need for recreation opportunities on the very popular and scenic Big Hole River.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

If no action was taken and the proposed modifications were not made, with a designated parking area, new camp loop road, and rehabilitation of the existing camp road, vehicle movement would continue to be difficult and, at times, unsafe. Vehicle parking would also continue to be inconvenient and insufficient, with vehicles often blocking other vehicles and parking along Trapper Creek Road creating congestion and safety issues for through traffic and neighboring residences. Camping facilities would continue to be inadequate and overcrowded. Resource degradation would continue to be an issue with continued erosion of the riverbank, sedimentation of the river, and degradation of native riparian vegetation. FWP would continue to provide general maintenance to the site and would continue to implement the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan to control noxious weeds on the property.

Preferred Alternative B: Proposed Action

In an effort to accommodate increasingly heavy public use and to improve recreational facilities at Salmon Fly FAS, FWP proposes to improve parking and camping facilities at the site. Proposed improvements include expanding and improving the parking area, stabilizing the riverbank, expanding and improving the campground facilities, and developing a new camp loop road.

11. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

FWP would employ Best Management Practices (BMP), which are designed to reduce sediment delivery to waterways during construction. FWP would develop the final design and specifications for the proposed action. All county, state and federal permits listed in Part I 8(a) above would be obtained by FWP as required. A private contractor selected through the State's contracting processes would complete the construction.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

Evaluation of the impacts of the proposed action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				1a.
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		Yes	1b.
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				1c.
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?			X		Yes Positive	1d.
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X			.	

1a. The proposed action would not affect existing soil patterns, structures, productivity, or fertility. Soil stability would be improved because vehicles would be limited to designated areas, the existing camp loop road would be rehabilitated and re-vegetated, and the riverbank would be stabilized with native riparian vegetation. Soil and geologic substructure would remain stable during and after the proposed work.

1b. During construction, some minor modifications to the existing soil features would be required for the construction of the camping and parking area, as well as the new camp loop road. Disturbed areas would be reseeded with a native seed mix to minimize erosion, sediment delivery to the Big Hole River, and the spread of noxious weeds. The FAS is managed for recreation and wildlife habitat and is not under commercial agricultural production so the proposed action would not affect agricultural production, soil productivity, or soil fertility. FWP Best Management Practices (BMP) would be followed during all phases of construction to minimize erosion.

1c. No unique geologic or physical features would be altered by the proposed action.

1d. Erosion of the unimproved parking area, unimproved campsites, and river bank are causing sediment delivery to the Big Hole River in the vicinity of the FAS and degradation of native riparian vegetation along the river. The proposed development of a designated parking area, designated campsites, a new gravel camp loop road, stabilization of the river bank, and rehabilitation of the existing camp loop road would reduce erosion of those surfaces and reduce sedimentation of the river. Minor amounts of sediment may enter the river during construction of the camping area, access road, and parking area. However, upon completion, erosion and sedimentation to the river would be reduced.

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X		Yes	2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				2b.
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		X				2e.

2a. Dust may be temporarily generated during construction of the designated parking area, designated campsites, and gravel camp loop road. If additional materials were needed off-site, loading at the source site would generate minor amounts of dust. FWP would follow FWP BMP during all phases of construction to minimize risks and reduce dust. See *Appendix D* for the BMP's. There would be a temporary increase in diesel exhaust from equipment used during construction. If the proposed action were implemented, odors from diesel exhaust would dissipate rapidly. These impacts would be short term and minor since they would occur only during the construction period.

2b. The latrine would continue to be regularly maintained to minimize objectionable odors.

2e. The proposed project would have no impact on air quality in the vicinity of Salmon Fly FAS and would not result in any discharge that could conflict with federal or state air quality regulations.

3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?			X		Yes	3a
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		Yes Positive	3b.
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?			X		Yes	3d.
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?			X		Yes	3h.
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)			X		Yes	3l.
m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)			X		Yes Positive	3m.

3a. Construction of the expanded parking area, designated campsites, new camp loop road, and river bank stabilization may cause a temporary, localized increase in turbidity in the Big Hole River. FWP would obtain a Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) 318 Authorization Permit for Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity. FWP BMP's would be followed during all phases of construction and rehabilitation of the existing camp loop road *(Appendix D).*

3b. Development of an expanded parking area, designated campsites, a new camp loop road, and river bank stabilization would reduce erosion from those surfaces and reduce sedimentation of the river. The proposed action would be designed to minimize any effect on surface water, surface runoff, and drainage patterns. FWP BMP would be followed *(Appendix D).*

3d. There may be a minor, temporary increase of runoff during construction. FWP BMP would be followed *(Appendix D).*

3h. The use of heavy equipment during construction may result in a slight risk of contamination from petroleum products and a temporary increase in sediment delivery to the Big Hole River. FWP BMP's would be followed during all phases of construction to minimize these risks *(Appendix D).*

3l. According to Jim Carpita, Beaverhead County Floodplain Administrator, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has not yet adopted floodplain mapping of the Big Hole River in Beaverhead County. According to the 1986 Flood Study of the Big Hole River, conducted by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, the entire FAS is located within the Floodway. However, according to the preliminary findings of a floodplain study conducted by Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), a small portion of the proposed project site along the Big Hole River is located within the floodway and the majority of the FAS is above the 100-year floodplain. Permits from FWP, Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the US Army Corps of Engineers, and Beaverhead County would be obtained to insure that the proposed project would be in compliance with federal, state, and county floodplain and water quality regulations.

3m. All impacts to water quality would be temporary resulting from construction. Water quality of the river could improve as a result of the proposed project by reducing sedimentation into the river from surface and riverbank erosion.

4. VEGETATION **Will the proposed action result in?**	**IMPACT ∗**					
	Unknown ∗	**None**	**Minor ∗**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated ∗**	**Comment Index**
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		Yes	4a
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				4b.
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				4d.
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		Yes	4e.
f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				4f.

4a. The proposed action would have no impact on the plant diversity or productivity of the FAS and would have a minor impact on plant abundance. Because the construction area is small, impacts from construction would be minor. Any area disturbed during construction would be reseeded with a native seed mix and the existing unimproved campsites and camp loop road would be rehabilitated and seeded with a native reclamation seed mix. Construction of the new camp loop road and campsites would disturb a relatively small, undeveloped area that has been disturbed by public use of the FAS for years. The construction of the expanded parking area would not disturb undeveloped land, though several hazard trees may need to be removed for public safety purposes.

4b. Vegetation found on Salmon Fly FAS is diverse with three Ecological Systems found on the FAS, as defined by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP), including: *Rocky Mountain Lower Montane-Foothill Riparian Woodland and Shrubland; Northern Rocky Mountain Lower Montane Riparian Woodland and Shrubland;* and *Rocky Mountain Lower Montane, Foothill, and Valley Grassland.* The FAS supports an extensive community of black cottonwood, Russian olive, red-osier dogwood, chokecherry, hawthorn, Wood's rose, willow, smooth brome, Kentucky bluegrass, and reed canarygrass. A variety of introduced grasses cover the developed portions of the FAS, including smooth brome, Kentucky bluegrass, and orchardgrass. The proposed project would not alter plant communities on the FAS.

4c. A search of the MNHP Montana Species of Concern database found there are some Montana plant Species of Concern that have been observed within the vicinity of Salmon Fly FAS; dwarf phacelia, mealy primrose, and annual Indian paintbrush. The last recorded observation date of dwarf phacelia in the area was 1895 so it is unlikely that the proposed project would have any impact on dwarf phacelia. The last recorded observation date of mealy primrose and annual Indian paintbrush in the vicinity of Salmon Fly FAS was 1997. Mealy primrose is primarily found wet meadow wetlands with relatively stable water tables and annual Indian paintbrush is primarily found on alkaline meadows. The preferred habitat for mealy primrose and annual Indian paintbrush is not found on Salmon Fly FAS so it is unlikely that the proposed project would have any impact on these species.

4d. No portion of Salmon Fly FAS is under agricultural production.

4e. Canada thistle, houndstongue, and spotted knapweed represent the few noxious weeds found on Salmon Fly FAS. Soils disturbed during construction could colonize with weeds. Disturbed areas would be reseeded with a native reclamation seed mix where necessary to reduce the establishment of weeds. In conjunction with the Beaverhead County Weed District, FWP would continue implementing the Statewide Integrated Weed Management Plan using chemical, biological, and mechanical methods to control weeds on the property. Weed management would include the establishment of native vegetation to prevent the spread of weeds. Vehicles would be restricted to the parking areas and access roads, which would be maintained as weed-free, and vehicles would not be allowed on undisturbed areas of the site to minimize the spread of noxious weeds. Weed control costs for Salmon Fly FAS in 2015 was approximately $500. FWP estimates that weed control will continue to cost approximately $500 during fiscal year 2016.

4f. According to a search of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey on October 8, 2015, no portion of Salmon Fly FAS is classified as Prime Farmland and the site has not been under agricultural production since FWP acquired the property in 1985.

A search of the MNHP wetland-mapping program on October 12, 2015 found that no wetlands are found on Salmon Fly FAS, though the riparian vegetation found on the southern portion of the FAS is classified as *Lotic Riparian Forest* and *Lotic Riparian Scrub Shrub* systems.

** 5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				5a.
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				5b.
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				5c.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				5f.
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		X				5h.
i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		X				5i.

5a. This stretch of the Big Hole River and the vicinity of Salmon Fly FAS are not considered critical habitat for any fish or wildlife species, so the proposed action would have no impact on any critical fish or wildlife habitat. The proposed improvements are designed to minimize impacts to wildlife habitat. Only hazard trees would be removed for construction of the parking area and camp loop road and a minimal number of trees and shrubs would be removed during development of the campsites. Every effort would be made to preserve all large healthy trees.

5b/5c. Wildlife species found in the vicinity of Salmon Fly FAS include white-tailed and mule deer, elk, moose, black bear, wolves, mountain lion, red fox, coyote, badger, beaver, northern river otter, American mink, and a variety of small mammals. A wide variety of resident and migratory bird species use or travel through the area on a seasonal basis, including Canada geese, bald eagle, golden eagle, osprey, American white pelican, great horned owl, great blue heron, and a variety of other raptors, waterfowl, and songbirds. According to Claire Gower, FWP Region 3 Non-Game Wildlife Biologist, the effects to fish and wildlife resulting from the proposed FAS improvements would be minimal. The area is already part of an existing developed area and close to an existing road network, so the proposed changes will not contribute to additional disturbance of the area. Additionally, because the area proposed for improvements is already heavily used, it is unlikely that there would be any changes or detrimental effect to critical seasonal wildlife habitat.

Game fish found in this stretch of the Big Hole River include arctic grayling, brook trout, brown trout, rainbow trout, burbot, and mountain whitefish. Other fish species found in this reach include white sucker, longnose sucker, mottled sculpin, and longnose dace.

According to Jim Olsen, FWP Region 3 Fisheries Biologist, the proposed project, including bank stabilization, would reduce sediment in the river and improve fish habitat.

5f. A search of the MNHP element occurrence database indicates no occurrences of species listed as Threatened or Endangered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) within the vicinity of Salmon Fly FAS. Golden Eagle, great blue heron, greater sage grouse, arctic grayling, hoary bat, spotted bat, and Townsend's big-eared bat which are Montana Animal Species of Concern, have been observed in the vicinity of Salmon Fly FAS *(Appendix B)*. According to Claire Gower, FWP Non-Game Biologist, it is unlikely that the proposed project would negatively impact any Montana animal Species of Concern.

According to Jim Olsen, FWP Region 3 Fisheries Biologist, the proposed project would have no negative impact on arctic grayling, a Montana Species of Concern. In fact, the proposed bank stabilization could improve arctic grayling habitat by reducing sediment in the river. Westslope cutthroat trout, a Montana Species of Concern, is rarely found in this stretch of the Big Hole River so the proposed project would have no impact on this species.

According to Nathan Lance, FWP Wolf Management Specialist, Salmon Fly FAS is within the habitat of the gray wolf. Currently there are no radio-collared or uncollared packs that have home ranges that overlap the project area. While it is possible for wolves to travel through the project area, none have been recently sighted in the immediate area of Salmon Fly FAS and it would be unlikely given the development of the area. The wolf population in Montana is strong and wolves may pass through just about any area including this site. According to Nathan Lance, FWP has no concerns with this project impacting gray wolves and no adverse impacts are anticipated from the proposed project on the wolf population.

5h. A search of the MNHP element occurrence database indicates no occurrences of species listed as Threatened or Endangered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) within the vicinity of Salmon Fly FAS. Golden Eagle, great blue heron, greater sage grouse, arctic grayling, hoary bat, spotted bat, and Townsend's big-eared bat, which are Montana Animal Species of Concern, have been observed in the vicinity of Salmon Fly FAS *(Appendix B)*. According to Claire Gower, it is unlikely that the proposed project would negatively impact any Montana animal Species of Concern.

5i. No wildlife species would be imported or exported to the area as a result of the proposed development. This project only involves the improvement of the FAS and will not promote the introduction or spread of invasive species.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X		Yes	6a
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?			X		Yes	6b.
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				

6a. Construction equipment would cause a temporary, minor increase in noise levels at the project site. Any increase in noise level at the construction site would be short term and minor.

6b. Salmon Fly FAS is located within ¼ mile of approximately five residences and within ½ mile of the town of Melrose. The minor and temporary increase of noise levels during construction may disturb nearby neighbors and visitors. FWP would follow the guidelines of the good neighbor policy, which would mitigate increased noise levels and would attempt to limit construction to periods of low visitation to minimize disturbance to others.

It is possible that there could be a minor increase in visitor use as a result of the improved parking and camping facilities, which could increase noise levels and disturb nearby residences. The FAS would be managed and regulated to minimize noise disturbance to neighbors.

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				7a.
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				7d.

7a. Because Salmon Fly FAS is not under agricultural production, the proposed project would have no impact on the productivity or profitability of the FAS.

7d. The proposed project would have no affect on the land use of nearby private properties.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown *	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		Yes	8a.
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X		Yes Positive	8c.
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)			X		Yes	8d.

8a. Physical disturbance of the soil during construction would encourage the establishment of additional noxious weeds on the site. In conjunction with the Beaverhead County Weed District, FWP would continue implementing an integrated approach to control noxious weeds, as outlined in the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan. The integrated plan uses a combination of biological, mechanical, and herbicidal treatments to control noxious weeds. The use of herbicides would be in compliance with application guidelines to minimize the risk of chemical spills or water contamination and would be applied by people trained in safe handling techniques.

There is a minor and temporary risk of fuel or oil from heavy equipment accidently releasing into the river during construction. Contractors would have absorbent materials on site to minimize any hydrocarbon releases, as well as conduct startup inspection of all hydraulic lines and cylinder seals daily to reduce the potential for a release. FWP BMP's would be followed during all phases of construction to minimize risks *(Appendix D).*

8c. The proposed project would improve public safety by providing adequate, designated parking facilities and improving traffic flow, thereby minimizing vehicle conflicts and overflow parking and congestion for through traffic on Trapper Creek Road.

8d. The use of herbicides to control noxious weeds could result in temporary water contamination from an inadvertent spill. The use of herbicides would be in compliance with application guidelines, outlined in the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan, to minimize this risk and would be applied by people trained in safe handling techniques.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ∗**					
	Unknown ∗	**None**	**Minor ∗**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated ∗**	**Comment Index**
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				9c.
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				9d.
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X		Yes Positive	9e.

9c. The proposed action may improve recreational use of the area by providing improved parking and camping facilities. This would benefit local retail and service businesses *(Appendix C - Tourism Report).*

9d. There would be no change in commercial use of the site.

9e. There is the potential for a minor increase in traffic along Trapper Creek Road. However, the proposed improvements to the parking area would improve traffic flow and help alleviate vehicle congestion at the FAS and would minimize overflow parking and congestion for through traffic on Trapper Creek Road.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ∗**					
	Unknown ∗	**None**	**Minor ∗**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated ∗**	**Comment Index**
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				10a.
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				10b.
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. Define projected revenue sources		X				10e.
f. Define projected maintenance costs.		X				10f.

10a. The proposed action would have no impact on public services or utilities. The proposed improvements would require periodic maintenance by FWP and the site would continue to be patrolled by FWP.

10b. The proposed action would have no effect on the local and state tax base and revenue.

10e. Overnight camping fees of $7 per night with a fishing license and $12 per night without a fishing license would continue to be charged at the FAS. Revenue from camping fees totaled approximately $1,866 for 2015 and is estimated to be $2,500 per year after campground improvements are completed.

10f. Projected annual operating, maintenance, weed control, and personnel expense for fiscal year 2015 is estimated to total approximately $2,000 plus an additional $1,400 for campground maintenance and operation.

** 11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X		Yes Positive	11a.
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				11b.
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)			X		Yes Positive	11c.
d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		X				11d.

11a/b. The proposed action would not affect the aesthetic values of the FAS. The parking area and camping area are visible from the Big Hole River and Trapper Creek Road, but not from nearby residences. Stabilizing the riverbank with native vegetation would improve the aesthetic value of the area.

11b. The site is already developed and the proposed improvements would have no effect on the aesthetic character of the neighborhood or community.

11c. The proposed action may improve recreational use of the area by increasing and improving parking and camping facilities. This could benefit local retail and service businesses *(Appendix C - Tourism Report).*

11d. No designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails, or wilderness areas would be impacted by the proposed improvements.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		X				12d.

12a/d. Steven Aaberg surveyed Salmon Fly FAS in 1986 and no cultural resources were identified. While this survey was completed almost 30 years ago, the site is in a recently active floodplain on the Big Hole River. FWP concluded that there is a low likelihood of adverse impacts to cultural resources should the project proceed as proposed. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has been consulted and has concurred with FWP recommendations for the project *(Appendix E).* If cultural materials are discovered during construction, work would cease and SHPO would be contacted for a more in-depth investigation.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		X				13f.
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		X				13g.

During construction of the proposed project, there may be minor and temporary impacts to the physical environment, but the impacts would be short-term and the improvements would benefit the community and recreational opportunities over the long-term. The proposed action would have no negative cumulative effects on the biological, physical, and human environments. When considered over the long-term, the proposed action positively impacts the public's recreational use of the Big Hole River, an important, popular, and heavily used recreational river.

13f. Salmon Fly FAS is a very popular and heavily used FAS. The proposed project is designed to improve recreational facilities on the site and is not expected to generate organized opposition or substantial public controversy.

13g. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineer 404 Federal Clean Water Act is the only federal permit required for the proposed development. The Montana DEQ 318 Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity and the FWP 124 Montana Stream Protection Act are the only state permits required for the proposed development. In addition, a Beaverhead County Floodplain Permit would also be required.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

During construction of the proposed project, there may be minor and temporary impacts to the physical environment, but the impacts would be short-term and the improvements would benefit the community and recreational opportunities over the long-term. The proposed action would have no negative cumulative effects on the biological, physical, and human environments. When considered over the long-term, the proposed action positively impacts the public's recreational use of the Big Hole River, an important, popular, and heavily used recreational river.

The minor impacts that were identified in the previous section are small in scale and would not influence the overall environment of the immediate area. The natural environment would continue to exist to provide habitat to transient and permanent wildlife species and would continue to be open to the public for access to the river for fishing, floating, boating, wildlife viewing and camping.

The proposed action would not impact the local wildlife species that frequent the property and the project would be designed to avoid conditions that stress wildlife populations. Although Montana Species of Concern (golden eagle, great blue heron, greater sage grouse, arctic grayling, hoary bat, spotted bat, Townsend's bat, dwarf phacelia, mealy primrose, and annual Indian paintbrush) have been observed in the vicinity of the proposed project site, the proposed project is unlikely to impact these species. None of these species are known to nest in the vicinity of the proposed project and Salmon Fly FAS does not provide preferred habitat for any of these species. In addition, these species are likely accustomed to disturbances from recreation, agriculture, and residential development that have occurred in the area for years. While it is possible for wolves to travel through the project area, none have been sighted and there is no pack located in the area, so it is unlikely that the proposed action would impact gray wolves.

Soils disturbed during construction could colonize with weeds. Disturbed areas would be reseeded with a native reclamation seed mix where necessary to reduce the establishment of weeds. In conjunction with Beaverhead County Weed Control District, FWP would continue implementing the Statewide Integrated Weed Management Plan using chemical, biological and mechanical methods to control weeds on the property.

The Big Hole River supports the last remaining native population of fluvial arctic grayling, a Montana Species of Concern, in the lower 48 states. Because the highest concentrations of arctic grayling occur in the upper reaches of the Big Hole River, the proposed project is not expected to adversely affect arctic grayling and could improve arctic grayling habitat by reducing sediment in the river.

The proposed improvements of Salmon Fly FAS would improve recreational opportunities by improving and expanding camping and parking facilities. The proposed project would also reduce resource degradation by reducing erosion from the river bank and unimproved parking and camping facilities. In addition, the proposed improvements would improve recreational opportunities for fishing, picnicking, and wildlife viewing on the very popular and scenic Big Hole River.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. **Public Involvement**:
   The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on the Salmon Fly FAS Proposed Improvement Project, the proposed action and alternatives:
   - Two public notices in each of these papers: the *Montana Standard,* the *Dillon Tribune* and the *Helena Independent Record*
   - Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: *http://fwp.mt.gov.*
   - Draft EA's will be available at the Region Three Headquarters in Bozeman and the State Headquarters in Helena.
   - A news release will be prepared and distributed to a standard list of media outlets interested in FWP Region Three issues.
   - Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed action.

   This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts, many of which can be mitigated.

   If requested within the comment period, FWP will schedule and conduct a public meeting on this proposed action.

2. **Duration of comment period.**
   The public comment period will extend for (30) thirty days. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., December 31, 2015 and can be e-mailed to rheagney@mt.gov or mailed to the address below:

   Salmon Fly FAS Proposed Improvement Project
   Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region 3
   1400 South 19th Avenue
   Bozeman, MT 59718

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. **Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? NO**
   If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.
   Based on an evaluation of impacts to the physical and human environment under MEPA, this environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts from the proposed action: therefore, an EIS is not necessary and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis. In determining the significance of the impacts, FWP assessed the severity, duration, geographic extent, and frequency of the impact, the probability that the impact would occur or reasonable assurance that the impact would not occur. FWP assessed the growth-inducing or growth-inhibiting aspects of the impact, the importance to the state and to society of the environmental resource or value affected, any precedent that would be set as a result of an impact of the proposed action that would commit FWP to future actions; and potential conflicts with local, federal, or state laws. As this EA revealed no significant impacts from the proposed actions, an EA is the appropriate level of review and an EIS is not required.

2. Persons responsible for preparing the EA:

Ray Heagney
Region 3 Fishing Access Site Manager
1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718
rheagney@mt.gov
406-994-6987

Andrea Darling
FWP EA Contractor
39 Big Dipper Drive
Montana City, MT 59634
apdarling@gmail.com

3. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:

Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Design and Construction
  - Lands Unit
  - Legal Unit
- Fisheries Division
- Wildlife Division

Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)
Montana Historic Preservation Office

APPENDICES

A. MCA 23-1-110 Qualification Checklist
B. Native Species Report - Montana Natural Heritage Program
C. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce
D. Fish, Wildlife and Parks Best Management Practices
E. State Historic Preservation Office – Clearance Letter

APPENDIX A
23-1-110 MCA PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date: October 15, 2015 **Person Reviewing:** Andrea Darling

Project Location: Salmon Fly Fishing Access Site is located on the Big Hole River one mile south of Melrose, Montana and one mile west of Interstate 15, 30 miles southwest of Butte in Beaverhead County, Section 35 T2S R9W.

Description of Proposed Work: The 12-acre Salmon Fly Fishing Access Site (FAS) has been a popular recreational site along the Big Hole River since its acquisition by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) in 1985 and provides quality recreational opportunities for fishing, boating, floating, camping, picnicking, and wildlife viewing. In an effort to accommodate heavy public use of the site, FWP proposes to improve parking and camping facilities at Salmon Fly FAS. Proposed improvements include expanding and improving the parking area, stabilizing the riverbank, expanding the campground, and constructing a new camp loop road.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed action or improvement is of enough significance to fall under 23-1-110 rules. (Please check all that apply and comment as necessary.)

[X] A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments: Yes, the expanded parking area and campground would be built over undeveloped land that has been previously disturbed by recreation.

[ ] B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments: No building construction.

[X] C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: Yes, for the expanded parking area and campground.

[X] D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments: Yes, the new parking area would increase parking capacity and would be constructed over undeveloped but previously disturbed land

[ ] E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments: No.

[ ] F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments: No.

[ ] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments: A cultural resource inventory will be conducted and SHPO concurrence will be sought.

[ ] H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments: No new utility lines.

[X] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments: Yes, the proposed campground expansion would increase campsites by at least 25%.

[ ] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern, including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments: No. The proposed project would not affect existing features or use patterns.

APPENDIX B

NATIVE SPECIES REPORT – MONTANA NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM
Sensitive Plants and Animals in the Vicinity of
Salmon Fly Fishing Access Site

Species of Concern Terms and Definitions

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) element occurrence database (http://nris.mt.gov) indicates no occurrences of Threatened, Endangered, or other species federally ranked by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) have been found in the vicinity of Salmon Fly FAS. The search indicates that golden eagle, great blue heron, greater sage grouse, arctic grayling, hoary bat, spotted bat, and Townsend's big-eared bat which are Montana Animal Species of Concern, have been observed on or near Salmon Fly FAS. Dwarf phacelia, mealy primrose, and annual Indian paintbrush, Montana Plant Species of Concern, were observed within one mile of Salmon Fly FAS as recently as 1997. More information on these species is included below.

Montana Species of Concern. The term **"**Species of Concern**"** includes taxa that are at-risk or potentially at-risk due to rarity, restricted distribution, habitat loss, and/or other factors. The term also encompasses species that have a special designation by organizations or land management agencies in Montana, including: Bureau of Land Management Special Status and Watch species; U.S. Forest Service Sensitive and Watch species; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Threatened, Endangered and Candidate species.

Status Ranks (Global and State)

The international network of Natural Heritage Programs employs a standardized ranking system to denote global (**G** -- range-wide) and state status (**S**) (Nature Serve 2003). Species are assigned numeric ranks ranging from 1 (critically imperiled) to 5 (demonstrably secure), reflecting the relative degree to which they are "at-risk". Rank definitions are given below. A number of factors are considered in assigning ranks -- the number, size and distribution of known "occurrences" or populations, population trends (if known), habitat sensitivity, and threat. Factors in a species' life history that make it especially vulnerable are also considered (e.g., dependence on a specific pollinator).

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Endangered Species Act)- Terms and Definitions

LE. Listed endangered: Any species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

LT. Listed threatened: Any species likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

C. Candidate: Those taxa for which sufficient information on biological status and threats exists to propose to list them as threatened or endangered.

DM. Recovered, delisted, and being monitored - Any previously listed species that is now recovered, has been delisted, and is being monitored.

BGEPA. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (BGEPA) prohibits anyone, without a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior, from taking bald or golden eagles, including their parts, nests, or eggs. The BGEPA provides criminal and civil penalties for persons who take, possess, sell, purchase, barter, offer to sell, purchase or barter,

transport, export or import, at any time or any manner, any bald eagle ... [or any golden eagle], alive or dead, or any part, nest, or egg thereof.

MBTA. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) implements four treaties that provide for international protection of migratory birds. The statute's language is clear that actions resulting in a "taking" or possession (permanent or temporary) of a protected species is a violation of the MBTA.

BCC. Birds of Conservation Concern 2008. The 1988 amendment to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act mandates the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to identify species, subspecies, and populations of all migratory nongame birds that, without additional conservation actions, are likely to become candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act

Status Ranks

Code	Definition
G1 S1	At high risk because of extremely limited and/or rapidly declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it highly vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.
G2 S2	At risk because of very limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.
G3 S3	Potentially at risk because of limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas.
G4 S4	Uncommon but not rare (although it may be rare in parts of its range), and usually widespread. Apparently not vulnerable in most of its range, but possibly cause for long-term concern.
G5 S5	Common, widespread, and abundant (although it may be rare in parts of its range). Not vulnerable in most of its range.

MFWP Conservation Need. Under Montana's Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy of 2005, individual animal species are assigned levels of conservation need as follows:

Tier I. Greatest conservation need. Montana FWP has a clear obligation to use its resources to implement conservation actions that provide direct benefit to these species, communities and focus areas.

Tier II. Moderate conservation need. Montana FWP could use its resources to implement conservation actions that provide direct benefit to these species communities and focus areas.

Tier III. Lower conservation need. Although important to Montana's wildlife diversity, these species, communities and focus areas are either abundant or widespread or are believed to have adequate conservation already in place.

Tier IV. Species that are non-native, incidental or on the periphery of their range and are either expanding or very common in adjacent states.

SENSITIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS IN THE VICINITY OF SALMON FLY FISHING ACCESS SITE

1. Ardea Herodias (Great Blue Heron)

Vertebrate animal- Bird — *Habitat- Riparian Forests*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S3**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**:**
U.S. Forest Service**:**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: **3**

Element Occurrence data was reported of great blue heron within the project area. Last recorded observation date was 1999.

2. Aquila chrysaetos (Golden Eagle)

Vertebrate animal- Bird — *Habitat- Grasslands*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S3**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**: BGEPA; MBTA; BCC**
U.S. Forest Service**:**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: **2**

Element Occurrence data was reported of golden eagle within one mile of the project area. Last recorded observation date was 2014.

3. Centrocercus urophansianus (Greater Sage Grouse)

Vertebrate animal- Bird — *Habitat- Sagebrush*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S2**
Global: **G3G4**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **C**
U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: **1**

No Element Occurrence data reported of greater sage grouse within one mile of the project area. Last observation date was 2011.

4. Thymallus arcticus (Arctic Grayling)

Vertebrate animal- Fish — *Habitat- Mountain Rivers, Lakes*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S1**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: **1**

Element Occurrence data was reported of arctic grayling within the project area. No observation date was recorded.

5. **Lasiurus cinereus (Hoary Bat)**

Vertebrate animal- Mammal	*Habitat- Riparian and Forests*
Natural Heritage Ranks	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S3**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G5**	U.S. Forest Service:
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: **2**

Element Occurrence data reported of hoary bat within one mile of the project area. Last observation date was 2006.

6. **Euderma maculatum (Spotted Bat)**

Vertebrate animal- Mammal	*Habitat- Cliffs with rock crevices*
Natural Heritage Ranks	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S3**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G4**	U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: **1**

Element Occurrence data reported of spotted bat within the project area. Last observation date was 2007.

7. **Corynorhinus townsendii (Townsend's Big-eared Bat)**

Vertebrate animal- Mammal	*Habitat- Caves in forested habitats*
Natural Heritage Ranks	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S3**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G3G4**	U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: **1**

Element Occurrence data reported of hoary bat within one mile of the project area. Last observation date was 2013.

8. **Phacelia scopulina (Dwarf Phacelia)**

Vascular Plant	*Habitat- Alkaline Sites*
Natural Heritage Ranks	Federal Agency Status:
State: **SH**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G4**	U.S. Forest Service:
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

Element Occurrence data was reported of dwarf phacelia within one mile of the project area. Last observation date was 1895.

9. **Primula incana (Mealy Primrose)**

Vascular Plant	*Habitat- Wetland/Riparian*
Natural Heritage Ranks	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S2**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G4G5**	U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

Element Occurrence data was reported of mealy primrose within one mile of the project area. Last observation date was 1997.

10. Castilleja exilis (Annual Indian Paintbrush)

Vascular Plant	*Habitat- Wetland/Riparian*
Natural Heritage Ranks	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S2**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G5**	U.S. Forest Service:
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

Element Occurrence data was reported of annual Indian paintbrush within one mile of the project area. Last observation date was 1997.

APPENDIX C

TOURISM REPORT

MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) & MCA 23-1-110

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by MCA 23-1-110 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Jeri Duran, Sales and Constituent Services Manager
Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development-Department of Commerce
301 S. Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Project Name: Salmon Fly FAS Proposed Improvement Project

Project Description: In an effort to accommodate heavy public use and improve recreational facilities at the site, FWP proposes to improve parking and camping facilities at Salmon Fly FAS. Proposed improvements include expanding and improving the parking area, stabilizing the riverbank, expanding the campground, and constructing a new camp loop road.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?
   NO **YES** If YES, briefly describe:

It would give visitors an opportunity to more safely pull over to view this stretch of the Big Hole.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?
   NO **YES** If YES, briefly describe:

It improves it greatly,

Signature Jeri Duran Date 8/31/15

APPENDIX D
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS
BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
10-02-02
Updated May 1, 2008

I. ROADS

A. Road Planning and location

1. Minimize the number of roads constructed at the FAS through comprehensive road planning, recognizing foreseeable future uses.
    a. Use existing roads, unless use of such roads would cause or aggravate an erosion problem.
2. Fit the road to the topography by locating roads on natural benches and following natural contours. Avoid long, steep road grades and narrow canyons.
3. Locate roads on stable geology, including well-drained soils and rock formations that tend to dip into the slope. Avoid slumps and slide-prone areas characterized by steep slopes, highly weathered bedrock, clay beds, concave slopes, hummocky topography, and rock layers that dip parallel to the slope. Avoid wet areas, including seeps, wetlands, wet meadows, and natural drainage channels.
4. Minimize the number of stream crossings.
    a. Choose stable stream crossing sites. “Stable” refers to streambanks with erosion-resistant materials and in hydrologically safe spots.

B. Road Design

1. Design roads to the minimum standard necessary to accommodate anticipated use and equipment. The need for higher engineering standards can be alleviated through proper road-use management. “Standard” refers to road width.
2. Design roads to minimize disruption of natural drainage patterns. Vary road grades to reduce concentrated flow in road drainage ditches, culverts, and on fill slopes and road surfaces.

C. Drainage from Road Surface

1. Provide adequate drainage from the surface of all permanent and temporary roads. Use outsloped, insloped or crowned roads, installing proper drainage features. Space road drainage features so peak flow on road surface or in ditches will not exceed their capacity.
    a. Outsloped roads provide means of dispersing water in a low-energy flow from the road surface. Outsloped roads are appropriate when fill slopes are stable, drainage will not flow directly into stream channels, and transportation safety can be met.
    b. For insloped roads, plan ditch gradients steep enough, generally greater than 2%, but less than 8%, to prevent sediment deposition and ditch erosion. The steeper gradients may be suitable for more stable soils; use the lower gradients for less stable soils.
    c. Design and install road surface drainage features at adequate spacing to control erosion; steeper gradients require more frequent drainage features. Properly constructed drain dips can be an economical method of road surface drainage. Construct drain dips deep enough into the sub-grade so that traffic will not obliterate them.

2. For ditch relief/culverts, construct stable catch basins at stable angles. Protect the inflow end of cross-drain culverts from plugging and armor if in erodible soil. Skewing ditch relief culverts 20 to 30 degrees toward the inflow from the ditch will improve inlet efficiency.
3. Provide energy dissipators (rock piles, slash, log chunks, etc.) where necessary to reduce erosion at outlet of drainage features. Cross-drains, culverts, water bars, dips, and other drainage structures should not discharge onto erodible soils or fill slopes without outfall protection.
4. Route road drainage through adequate filtration zones, or other sediment-settling structures. Install road drainage features above stream crossings to route discharge into filtration zones before entering a stream.

D. Construction/Reconstruction
1. Stabilize erodible, exposed soils by seeding, compacting, riprapping, benching, mulching, or other suitable means.
2. At the toe of potentially erodible fill slopes, particularly near stream channels, pile slash in a row parallel to the road to trap sediment. When done concurrently with road construction, this is one method to effectively control sediment movement and it also provides an economical way of disposing of roadway slash. Limit the height, width and length of these "slash filter windrows" so not to impede wildlife movement. Sediment fabric fences or other methods may be used if effective.
3. Construct cut and fill slopes at stable angles to prevent sloughing and subsequent erosion.
4. Avoid incorporating potentially unstable woody debris in the fill portion of the road prism. Where possible, leave existing rooted trees or shrubs at the toe of the fill slope to stabilize the fill.
5. Place debris, overburden, and other waste materials associated with construction and maintenance activities in a location to avoid entry into streams. Include these waste areas in soil stabilization planning for the road.
6. When using existing roads, reconstruct only to the extent necessary to provide adequate drainage and safety; avoid disturbing stable road surfaces. Consider abandoning existing roads when their use would aggravate erosion.

E. Road Maintenance
1. Grade road surfaces only as often as necessary to maintain a stable running surface and to retain the original surface drainage.
2. Maintain erosion control features through periodic inspection and maintenance, including cleaning dips and cross-drains, repairing ditches, marking culvert inlets to aid in location, and clearing debris from culverts.
3. Avoid cutting the toe of cut slopes when grading roads, pulling ditches, or plowing snow.
4. Avoid using roads during wet periods if such use would likely damage the road drainage features. Consider gates, barricades or signs to limit use of roads during wet periods.

II. **RECREATIONAL FACILITIES** (parking areas, campsites, trails, ramps, restrooms)

A. Site Design
1. Design a site that best fits the topography, soil type, and stream character, while minimizing soil disturbance and economically accomplishing recreational objectives. Keep roads and parking lots at least 50 feet from water; if closer, mitigate with vegetative buffers as necessary.

2. Locate foot trails to avoid concentrating runoff and provide breaks in grade as needed. Locate trails and parking areas away from natural drainage systems and divert runoff to stable areas. Limit the grade of trails on unstable, saturated, highly erosive, or easily compacted soils.
3. Scale the number of boat ramps, campsites, parking areas, bathroom facilities, etc. to be commensurate with existing and anticipated needs. Facilities should not invite such use that natural features will be degraded.
4. Provide adequate barriers to minimize off-road vehicle use.

B. Maintenance: Soil Disturbance and Drainage
1. Maintenance operations minimize soil disturbance around parking lots, swimming areas and campsites, through proper placement and dispersal of such facilities or by reseeding disturbed ground. Drainage from such facilities should be promoted through proper grading.
2. Maintain adequate drainage for ramps by keeping side drains functional or by maintaining drainage of road surface above ramps or by crowning (on natural surfaces).
3. Maintain adequate drainage for trails. Use mitigating measures, such as water bars, wood chips, and grass seeding, to reduce erosion on trails.
4. When roads are abandoned during reconstruction or to implement site-control, they must be reseeded and provided with adequate drainage so that periodic maintenance is not required.

III. RAMPS AND STREAM CROSSINGS

A. Legal Requirements
1. Relevant permits must be obtained prior to building bridges across streams or boat ramps. Such permits include the SPA 124 permit, the COE 404 permit, and the DNRC Floodplain Development Permit.

B. Design Considerations
1. Placement of boat ramp should be such that boats can load and unload with out difficulty and the notch in the bank where the ramp was placed does not encourage bank erosion. Extensions of boat ramps beyond the natural bank can also encourage erosion.
2. Adjust the road grade or provide drainage features (e.g. rubber flaps) to reduce the concentration of road drainage to stream crossings and boat ramps. Direct drainage flow through an adequate filtration zone and away from the ramp or crossing through the use of gravel side-drains, crowning (on natural surfaces) or 30-degree angled grooves on concrete ramps.
3. Avoid unimproved stream crossings on permanent streams. On ephemeral streams, when a culvert or bridge is not feasible, locate drive-throughs on a stable, rocky portion of the stream channel.
4. Unimproved (non-concrete) ramps should only be used when the native soils are sufficiently gravelly or rocky to withstand the use at the site and to resist erosion.

C. Installation of Stream Crossings and Ramps
1. Minimize stream channel disturbances and related sediment problems during construction of road and installation of stream crossing structures. Do not place erodible material into stream channels. Remove stockpiled material from high water zones. Locate temporary construction bypass roads in locations where

the stream course will have a minimal disturbance. Time the construction activities to protect fisheries and water quality.

2. Where ramps enter the stream channel, they should follow the natural streambed in order to avoid changing stream hydraulics and to optimize use of boat trailers.
3. Use culverts with a minimum diameter of 15 inches for permanent stream crossings and cross drains. Proper sizing of culverts may dictate a larger pipe and should be based on a 50-year flow recurrence interval. Install culverts to conform to the natural streambed and slope on all perennial streams and on intermittent streams that support fish or that provide seasonal fish passage. Place culverts slightly below normal stream grade to avoid culvert outfall barriers. Do not alter stream channels upstream from culverts, unless necessary to protect fill or to prevent culvert blockage. Armor the inlet and/or outlet with rock or other suitable material where needed.
4. Prevent erosion of boat ramps and the affected streambank through proper placement (so as to not catch the stream current) and hardening (riprap or erosion resistant woody vegetation).
5. Maintain a 1-foot minimum cover for culverts 18-36 inches in diameter, and a cover of one-third diameter for larger culverts to prevent crushing by traffic.

APPENDIX E

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

CONCURRENCE LETTER

From: Murdo, Damon
Sent: Tuesday, October 27, 2015 12:40 PM **To:** Mangum, Bardell
Subject: FWP FY 15-16 FISHING ACCESS SITE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

October 27, 2015

Bardell Mangum
MT FWP
PO Box 200701
Helena MT 59620-0701

RE: FWP FY 15-16 FISHING ACCESS SITE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS. SHPO Project #: 2015102603

Dear Mr. Mangum:

Thank you for your letter regarding the above-cited projects. We agree that for the majority of the projects there is a low likelihood cultural properties will be impact and, therefore, feel that a recommendation for a cultural resource inventory is unwarranted at this time. These projects include #'s 294B.1, 465.4, 289.2, **789.3 {Salmon Fly FAS},** 399B.2, 610A.1, 940.4, 521A.1, 570.3, 1018.5, 780.1. However, keep in mind that it is SHPO's position that any structure over fifty years of age is considered historic and is potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. If any structures are to be altered and are over fifty years old we would recommend that they be recorded and a determination of their eligibility be made prior to any disturbance taking place.

We also agree with your findings that project #'s 625.1, 80.2, and 115.3 may have the potential to impact cultural resources. Therefore we would ask that you submit a formal file search request to our office

for these three projects along with any further project documentation that you have. We will then be able to comment on what we feel may, or may not be necessary with these three projects.

If you have any further questions or comments you may contact me at (406) 444-7767 or by e-mail at dmurdo@mt.gov. Thank you for consulting with us.

Sincerely,

Damon Murdo
Cultural Records Manager
State Historic Preservation Office

File: FWP/FISH/2015